



David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights  
**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

## **2020 SUMMER FELLOWSHIP GUIDE**

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Note: This is a guide for Faculty of Law students considering applying for an Asper Centre summer fellowship.

## I. Information Sessions and Application Deadlines

<b>October 30, 2019</b> 12:30-2:00 p.m. J140	<b><u>Information Session</u></b> : Introduction to IHRP and Asper Centre Summer Fellowship Opportunities
<b>February 11, 2020</b> 12:00 p.m.	<b><u>Asper Fellowship Application Deadline (for all fellowships, regardless of funding source)</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applications should be submitted through <a href="http://utlawcareers.ca">utlawcareers.ca</a></li></ul>
<b>March 10, 2020</b> 9:30 a.m.	<b><u>Asper Fellowship Offer Date</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students who have been selected for Asper fellowships will be notified by <b>email</b> at the same time as they are notified about other Faculty of Law co-curricular program offers.</li></ul>

## II. Introduction to the Asper Centre Fellowship Program

Every year the David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights (“Asper”) offers between one and three fellowships that focus on Canadian constitutional rights, multiculturalism and/or protection of human rights in Canada (see Section IV for more details.) Students whose projects relate to these topics are not eligible to apply for IHRP fellowships and may only apply for an Asper Fellowship. Fellows have the opportunity to participate in human rights research and advocacy, often at the grassroots level. A list of past student fellowships, including reports about their experiences, can be found on the Asper Centre [website](#).

This guide provides information about the fellowship program to assist you with applying for an fellowship.

### **a. Who can Apply?**

Asper summer fellowships are open to all 1L and 2L J.D. students at the Faculty of Law, and to a limited number of LL.M. students. Law students enrolled in joint degree programs are also eligible to apply. 3L, S.J.D., and exchange students are ineligible. Note that students enrolled in a joint degree program may be requested to maximize funding opportunities from both faculties; please contact the Asper Centre to discuss if you are enrolled in a joint-degree program.

### **b. Process**

Students apply to become an Asper summer fellow and must meet all associated deadlines and requirements (see above). Application forms are available at [UTlawcareers.ca](http://UTlawcareers.ca) and completed applications must be submitted electronically through [UTlawcareers](http://UTlawcareers).

### **c. Funding**

The funding for the Asper fellowships comes from an endowment gifted by John and Mary Yaremko. Asper fellowships are available to all eligible students; though we will consider financial need as one factor in overall assessment of the student’s application. Please note

that the Faculty does not have additional discretionary funds to support human rights fellowships.

**d. General Expectations**

Fellows are required to complete short mid-summer and final reports, which are usually posted online, and are expected to facilitate contact between the Asper Centre Executive Director and their host organization.

Students are expected to attend at least one event to share their experiences with prospective fellows, and may be asked to participate in other events, depending on the subject matter of their fellowship.

**e. Geographic Limitations**

The conditions attached to the funding for these fellowships include the requirement that the fellowship focus on domestic constitutional and/or human rights issues within Canada. If you wish to apply for funding for an organization outside of Canada, you should look to the International Human Rights Program fellowships.

**f. Basic Information**

i. Amount of Funding

Students who apply and obtain funding for an Asper fellowship receive a stipend of between \$3000- \$10,000. *Note: In 2020 the Asper Centre is awarding one fellowship only for the total amount of \$10,000.*

ii. Eligibility for Funding

Funding is available to:

- 1L and 2L J.D. students (including students who have received IHRP faculty or firm-funded fellowships in the past); and
- A limited number of LL.M. students.

iii. Setting up an Fellowship

The Asper fellowships are available to support both competitive and student-initiated fellowships. (See below to learn more about the types of fellowships available and how to apply for each.)

iv. Selection of Fellows

Applications for Asper fellow ships are considered by the Executive Director of the Asper Centre, and the Assistant Dean (Students). Applications are assessed on the following criteria: the host organization, the proposal, and the student's strengths and interests. It is expected that the process will be competitive.

v. Duration of Fellowship

Asper fellows are expected to fellow for a minimum of ten weeks, the precise dates for which will be decided by the fellow and the organization. Experience has shown that this is the

shortest time within which a fellow can learn about the organization and its work, and still contribute usefully to the organization. Many fellows arrange for longer fellowships.

### **g. Student-Initiated Fellowships**

It is expected that most Asper fellowships will be selected based on student-initiated fellowship proposals. It takes a fair bit of time and effort to apply for a student-initiated fellowship (see the “Tips” section below). However, it is hoped that this time and effort is worthwhile in terms of ensuring that your fellowship caters to your unique background and interests and is as fulfilling as possible.

### **h. Competitive Fellowships**

Some organizations have established a competitive process for summer fellowships. To apply for a competitive fellowship you must fulfill all the organization’s application requirements and submit your application directly to the organization. Students should be aware that they may have no control over the work that they do with the host organization (versus student-initiated fellowships where they work with the host organization in advance to develop a project).

A general overview of the process is as follows:

- The student completes all application requirements stipulated by the recruiting organization and submits the application directly to the recruiting organization by specified deadline.
- The recruiting organization determines whether or not to present the student with an Offer Letter.
- If a student receives an Offer Letter and the organization provides no funding or insufficient funding, the student can apply for funding from the Asper Centre. His/her application will be considered along with the pool of student-initiated fellowship applications.

If you have not received an Offer Letter by the deadline for submission of applications, you can still apply for funding, but your application may not be as competitive and, if you are approved for funding, it will be conditional on receipt of the Offer Letter.

## **III. Tips for Putting Together a Successful Fellowship Proposal**

### **Step 1: Identify your Strengths and Interests**

Before you approach a host organization, think carefully about your strengths and interests. A strong proposal capitalizes on the qualities and experiences that make you unique. Consider the following questions when determining your strength and interests:

- What were you interested in and what did you study before coming to law? What work experience or volunteer experiences do you have?
- What interests have you developed in law school? What topics have grabbed your attention? Could particular topics, courses, or volunteer experiences form the basis of an interesting fellowship?
- What are your personal and professional strengths? Do you like working in groups or do you tend to work alone? Are you well-organized? Do you like predictability or “flying by the seat of your pants”?

- Do you want to be on the “front lines” (field work) or do you prefer to be “behind the scenes” (policy work)? Do you want to have direct contact with clients or with policy leaders?
- Do you have particular life experiences that may be useful in terms of advocacy on behalf of particular vulnerable groups?
- Can you speak another language?

### Step 2: Identify Potential Host Organizations

At this stage, you should identify 2-3 potential host organizations. Students often find this the most difficult step in the process. Here are some ways to identify hosts:

- Look at the Asper Potential Host Organizations list, which is available online.
- Brainstorm people you already know who work in public interest organizations. Approach these people and ask them for information about potential hosts.
- Do some research to isolate those organizations that are already working on the issues in which you are interested. Google, google, google!
- Consult the list of past Asper summer fellowships and determine whether any of the organizations on the list share your interests. (The list of past fellows along with reports can be found on our [website](#).)
- Contact previous fellows to learn more about the organization they worked for and other organizations that they may have developed connections with. (To obtain up-to-date contact information for past fellows, contact the Executive Director of the Asper Centre.)
- Speak with the Executive Director of the Asper Centre about possible contacts or ideas she may have.

An ideal host organization will have at least some of the following attributes:

- At least a portion of their work will focus on constitutional rights, multiculturalism or domestic human rights law or advocacy;
- They will appear credible (to determine credibility check out who funds them, who is on their board, who is their staff etc.); and
- They will have hosted fellows before and/or understand the responsibilities associated with the same.

### Step 3: Approach Potential Host Organizations (for Student-Initiated Fellowships Only)

When are you applying for a student-initiated fellowship, you will be required to approach the host. Before you approach a potential host organization, you should understand the type of work the organization undertakes, consider why you want to work with them, and be able to articulate how you will add value to their existing work.

Bear in mind the following when you approach a potential host organization:

- Try to identify the person(s) at the organization who would most benefit from or be interested in your fellowship proposal and address your correspondence to that person. If you cannot identify such a person, address it to the Executive Director and Legal Director.
- If you know someone who has a contact at the organization (i.e. a former fellow, the Executive Director, a personal contact), do not hesitate to request that he/she facilitate your introduction to the organization.

- You may wish to send an initial email outlining your interest in the organization and then suggest a follow-up phone call to discuss details. Do not underestimate the power of speaking directly to someone versus communication exclusively through email.
- Once you have solidified your partnership, request a letter of support to include in your application package.
- All correspondence should be professional in tone and content. Do not hesitate to ask the Executive Director of the Asper Centre review a draft of your correspondence.

#### Step 4: Draft the Proposal

The proposal is one of the most important parts of your application. (Please find attached a sample fellowship application for your review.)

A strong proposal will answer the following questions:

- What are the issues or problems that you hope to engage with? Why are these issues important? Why are *you* interested in these issues?
- What is the goal of your particular project? Is the goal realistic given time, financial, and other constraints?
- What is the legal component to the work that you will be doing for the organization?
- How does your project relate to your particular skills or experiences?
- Who is your host organization? Does this organization have particular expertise with the issue? Are they credible? What is their previous track record? Have they hosted past fellows? If so, what have these fellows done?
- What kind of contribution can you make to the host organization? How will your work contribute to a solution to these problems?
- What are some of the potential problems or stumbling blocks you may encounter and how would you address these?
- What do you hope to take away from the experience?

You may wish to ask your host organization to review your proposal to ensure that it reflects their understanding of the project. Staff in the Career Development Office have also generously offered to review proposals.

#### Step 5: Funding Level

The Asper Centre usually awards fellows an amount roughly equivalent to the minimum wage. You must disclose any and all other funds that you have received or expect to receive in relation to the fellowship.



## APPENDIX A: Sample Fellowship Application

A. Student Contact Information (redacted)

B. Financial Aid Information (redacted)

C. Fellowship for which you are Applying

Please check off the fellowships for which you are applying.

Asper Fellowship  
 Student-Initiated  
 Competitive

Have you applied for or received other Summer Fellowships? If so, please provide details below.

*I have not applied for other fellowships.*

D. General Statement of Interest in Human Rights and/or Public Interest Law and Related Skills

*I am passionate about the intersections of constitutional law with immigration and refugee law. I entered law school with the goal of working in immigration and refugee law and to advocate for policy changes that would allow migrants to access the same rights as citizens in Canada. Funding for a Joint IHRP – Asper Centre Internship would allow me to work on an important project in this area, through researching immigration detention in Canada for the Refugee Law Office. In the past two years, I have had the opportunity to become involved with a number of meaningful projects that have fueled my commitment to working in the area of migrant rights. Last year, I was a member of the Refugee Law Working Group at the David Asper Centre, where I helped draft a memorandum on State Protection and delivered a presentation on the refugee determination process for frontline workers. Currently, I am involved with the Immigration and Refugee Detention Centre's project, which has allowed me to deliver public legal education presentations to detainees. I have also been able to work directly with refugees and immigrants through my practicum at Access Alliance, an organization committed to improving the social determinants of health for newcomers to Canada. Through working as a legal research assistant on a number of projects, I have also developed concrete legal research, writing and editing skills that would allow me to make a meaningful contribution to the RLO's work.*

E. Current Courses and Transcript (redacted)

F. Fellowship Proposal

*The Refugee Law Office: Providing Direct Legal Services and Public Legal Education*

*The refugee law office (RLO) is a critically important institution for some of the most vulnerable people in Canada: immigrants and refugees. As a division of legal aid, the RLO assists clients with refugee claims, risk assessment applications, appeals of deportation orders and Federal Court hearings. The Refugee Law Office has also intervened on a number of constitutional cases, through providing legal representation for the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers. I am motivated to complete an internship with the RLO because I am passionate about refugee rights and hope to work in this area in my future career.*

## **Summer Project**

### *Immigration Detention Advocacy Project*

*In my project for the RLO, I will research and write a report on some of the most pressing issues in immigration detention. This project is particularly important to me after my involvement with the Immigration and Refugee Detention Centres Project through Pro Bono Students Canada this year, where I was able to meet with detainees in person to hear their stories and provide legal information about the refugee claim process in Canada. The issues in immigration detention are directly related to constitutional law, as migrants in detention are not necessarily afforded the same Charter protections as Canadians. My research and final report will support the refugee law office's current and future advocacy for systemic changes to Canada's immigration detention regime.*

*My final project will be in the form of a comprehensive report on the issues described below. In creating this report, I will research past complaints, reports from allied organizations (e.g. Amnesty International, the Red Cross, UNHRC etc.) and through access to information requests from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). It should highlight specific egregious case examples and systemic issues in the detention system.*

*One of the primary topics I will investigate is the quasi-judicial system of detention review. Immigration detainees receive detention reviews monthly to determine whether or not they will be detained for another month or released on bail. The potential for indefinite detention under this system raises serious human rights and constitutional law concerns. My research will investigate issues concerning the lack of transparency in the detention review process, reliance on information not disclosed to the claimant, and other procedural fairness issues.*

*My project will further investigate the issues with the transfer of detainees to provincial facilities. Currently, some individuals with medical issues, serious mental health concerns, and others with no criminal records are held in provincial prisons. This results in them attending their immigration hearings in highly prejudicial prison garb. Furthermore, individuals detained on criminal hold in medium security are transferred to maximum security upon transfer to immigration hold. My project will identify some of the key human rights issues and constitutional law concerns with these transfers.*

### *Benefit to the organization and the public interest*

*My final report will assist the refugee law office in its advocacy to improve the immigration detention system. It will provide them with evidence to advocate for fairer detention review policies, more meaningful use of designative representatives for individuals in detention, and to develop alternatives to detention. Individuals in immigration detention are some of the most marginalized people in Canada, separated from their families and communities. Unlike those detained in the criminal system, immigration detainees do not have an “end date” to their detention, making the experience significantly more stressful. This research will assist the RLO in advocating for more fairness and transparency in the detention process, therefore defending immigration detainees’ human rights more broadly.*

#### Personal Development of Skills

*Working at the Refugee Law Office will also allow me to develop practical legal skills in the area of immigration and refugee law. My project on detention issues will allow me to further develop my legal research and writing skills. Additionally, I will have opportunities to assist lawyers and articling students in interviewing clients, completing basis of claim forms and drafting submissions for the immigration and refugee board. Having a law student for the summer should be an asset for the RLO as refugee appeals, stay of deportation orders and other claims occur on very short time lines. This will be an invaluable opportunity for me to gain experience in the area of immigration and refugee law, which I intend to practice in upon graduation.*

#### Legal Supervision

*I will be supervised by the staff lawyers at the Refugee Law Office in respect of all of the legal research and other work that I will be conducting. I will primarily reporting to \* staff lawyer.*

### G. Proposed Host Organization Details

*Organization Name: Refugee Law Office Toronto (Legal Aid Ontario)*

*Area of Work: Legal Aid Ontario’s Refugee Law Office provides legal assistance to refugee claimants and immigrants who are eligible for legal aid. It also provides important support to lawyers, legal clinics and community groups. Its staff of lawyers, paralegals and support staff specialize in immigration and refugee law.*

*Mailing Address:*

*20 Dundas St West, Suite 202  
Toronto, ON  
M5G 2H1*

*Telephone Number: 416-977-8111*

*Proposed Supervisor: \* Staff Lawyer*

### H. Letter of Support

*Please find the attached email that confirms support for this fellowship from the RLO.*

I. Funding Request

*\$4500.00 for 10 weeks full-time.*

J. Short Biographical Paragraph

*Jane Doe is a 2nd year JD candidate at the Faculty of Law. She completed a B.A. (Hons.) in Sociology from the University of Toronto. In 2003, Jane spent a year living and working in India with the NGO X. At NGO X, she was responsible for organizing workshops for migrant workers on international human rights instruments. Jane previously completed a summer fellowship program with X and Y where she conducted election monitoring during the [country redacted] elections. At the law school, Jane is involved in XYZ and is a member of XYZ. Jane is proficient in English and French.*

**Appendix B:**

**2020 Asper Centre Summer Fellowship Application Form  
(available on [utlawcareers.ca](http://utlawcareers.ca))**



**2020 SUMMER FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION FORM  
(ASPER FELLOWSHIPS)**

**A. Student Contact Information**

Name:

Year of Studies:

Sessional Address:

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Phone Number:

E-mail:

**B. Financial Need Information**

Please check all that apply to you for the academic year 2016-:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am receiving bursaries and/or interest-free loans from the Faculty of Law.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am receiving government student financial assistance (i.e., OSAP, BC Student Assistance Program, US Stafford or Perkins loans). Please specify from which province/jurisdiction you are receiving funding:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am receiving needs-based funding from the following organization (please specify):

\_\_\_\_\_ I am not receiving Faculty of Law financial aid or government student financial assistance but have submitted the Financial Aid form to the Financial Aid Office who has determined that I have financial need.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am not receiving Faculty of Law financial aid or government student financial assistance and do not wish to be assessed for financial need or have been assessed as not having financial need.

**C. Funding**

Please check off the funding sources for which you wish to be considered

- I am applying for Faculty of Law funding  
 I am not applying for funding from the Faculty or a firm

**D. Fellowship for which you are Applying**

Please check off the fellowships for which you are applying.

- Asper Fellowship  
 Student-Initiated  
 Competitive (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

Have you applied for or received Summer Fellowships in the past? If so, please provide details below:

**E. General Statement of Interest in Canadian Constitutional Law, Human Rights and/or Public Interest Law and Related Skills**

In no more than 250 words, please provide a description of your interest in Canadian constitutional rights, human rights or public interest law, and any related skills (language, work in high pressure environment, organizational development etc.).

Please include information regarding any particular substantive interest (i.e. women's human rights, humanitarian law, children's rights, economic and social rights etc.) and/or past related experience (i.e. past employment, volunteer positions, courses, extra-curricular activities, publications etc.).

If you have not yet had the opportunity to demonstrate your interest in Canadian constitutional law or human rights, please explain what factors informed your decision to apply for this fellowship.

**F. Current Courses, Transcript and Curriculum Vitae**

Please list all courses that you will be taking during the current academic year. Please attach your transcript. Please attach your curriculum vitae.

**G. Fellowship Proposal**

In no more than 750 words, please describe your proposed fellowship. A strong proposal will answer the following questions:

- What are the issues or problems that you hope to engage with? Why are these issues important? Why are *you* interested in these issues?
- What is the goal of your particular project? Is the goal realistic given time, financial, and other constraints?
- How does your project relate to your particular skills or experiences?
- What legal skills and knowledge will you gain from this project?
- Who is your host organization? Does this organization have particular expertise with the issue? Are they credible? What is their previous track record?
- Who will supervise any law-related work that you do?
- What kind of contribution can you make to the host organization? How will your work contribute to a solution to these problems?
- What are some of the potential problems or stumbling blocks you may encounter and how would you address these?
- What do you hope to take away from the experience?

#### **H. Proposed Host Organization Details**

Please provide the full name of the host organization, a description of its work or mandate, its mailing address, telephone number, the name of your proposed supervisor or hosts and their email address.

#### **I. Letter of Support or Offer Letter**

Please attach to your application a letter or email message of support from your proposed host organization.

#### **J. Funding Request**

Please indicate the number of weeks and hours per week that you intend to work with the organization. Your funding request should be the equivalent of minimum wage for the hours worked. Please indicate any unusual expenses that you anticipate you might incur (e.g. travel to remote areas) that will not be covered by your host organization.



## Appendix C: Alternative Sources of Funding

In addition to the Yaremko endowment administered through the Asper Centre, there are other sources of funding that you may wish to explore when planning a fellowship. We encourage you to apply to all available funding sources including additional faculty funding. Below are several possible alternative sources of funding. Further information on alternative sources of funding can be found in the McGill *International Law Career Guide* (on reserve in the library) or through the *Canadian Directory to Foundations and Grants* (available at Robarts Library.)

- [Donner Civic Leadership Fellowship](#) – administered through the Career Development Office
- [June Callwood Fellowships](#) – for aboriginal students
- [SLS Public Interest Advocacy Fellowship](#) – funded by the SLS
- [Action Canada Fellowship](#)  
This is a \$20,000 CDN fellowship grant that requires a one year commitment concurrent with studies. However, the proceeds you receive can be used for any purpose, including a summer fellowship. Please check website regularly for application deadline.

For those of you who are graduating (or recently graduated) and interested in human rights work, please consider the following:

- [Law Foundation of Ontario Public Interest Articling Fellowship](#)

## Appendix D: Sample Email to Prospective Host Organization

\* This is a sample email that can be used as a template when contacting potential host organizations to explore the possibility of a summer fellowship. You are by no means required to use this email, and can modify it as you see fit. The key is to appear professional and like you did your homework. This should not look like a form letter that you have sent to a number of different organizations!

You should address the email to a specific person (i.e. fellowship coordinator, Executive Director, staff lawyer etc.), and avoid sending it to a general mailbox.

Dear [NAME OF RECIPIENT – AVOID “TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN”]:

I am a [YEAR]-year law student at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law in Toronto. I am very interested in completing an fellowship at [FULL NAME OF ORGANIZATION] during the summer of 2020, and am writing to explore the possibility of that with you. Indeed, if you are interested in hosting me as a fellow, I may be able to obtain funding to support my fellowship through the Faculty’s David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights (“Asper Centre”).

The Asper Centre is a centre within the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law devoted to advocacy, research and education in the areas of constitutional rights in Canada. One of the Centre’s educational aims is to help prepare law students for public interest advocacy work through its clinical education program and by supporting student summer fellowships with public interest organizations. You can learn more about the Asper Centre and past fellowship placements by visiting [www.aspercentre.ca](http://www.aspercentre.ca) or contacting the Executive Director, Cheryl Milne at [cheryl.milne@utoronto.ca](mailto:cheryl.milne@utoronto.ca).

I am confident that I would contribute positively to your organization for the following reasons. [PROVIDE OUTLINE OF YOUR PAST EXPERIENCES, SKILLS, EXPERIENCE AND LINK THIS DIRECTLY TO THE ORGANIZATION’S WORK]. Please find attached my curriculum vitae, which provides additional information about my experience and background.

I look forward to hearing from you about the possibility of working with [NAME OF ORGANIZATION]. Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss further or if you require additional information. I can be reached via email or by telephone at [ADD NUMBER]. I understand that you must be very busy; therefore, if I do not hear from you within two weeks, I will follow up once more. Also, please feel free to forward my email to you colleagues in the event that someone else at the organization may be better able to assist me.

Sincerely,  
[YOUR FULL NAME]  
J.D. Candidate, Expected 20[XX]